

‘GRASSROOTS CLEAN CAMPAIGN ACT’

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Working under a Congressional finding that the existing system of private political contributions has become a fundamental threat to the integrity of the national election process, has eroded public confidence in the legitimacy of that election process, and that the provisions contained in this Act are necessary to prevent the corruption of the public’s faith in the Nation’s system of governance, the ‘Grassroots Clean Campaign Act’ drafted by Congressmen Dave Obey (D-WI) and Barney Frank (D-MA) is intended to break the nexus of money in the legislative process and return our government to the American public.

- To enable average American citizens to take the political system back from special interests and the well connected, the plan creates the Grassroots Good Citizenship Fund into which individual, public-minded Americans can contribute.
- To finance general elections for the House of Representatives, the FEC is authorized to conduct a major advertising campaign from January 1 to April 15 of each year alerting the public to the existence and purpose of the fund. Citizens can make voluntary contributions in their federal tax return, which will not add to the deficit because they are a “check-up,” not a “check-off.” In addition, the fund is supplemented by a fee charged on corporate profits (1/10 of 1% on taxable income above \$10 million).
- Because costs vary widely from district to district, the Grassroots Good Citizenship Fund would provide each Congressional district with an amount to be distributed amongst the candidates based on the median family income within that district.
- That money would be distributed to candidates based on their party’s performance in the last two elections. Ex: If the GOP garnered 52% of the vote in the last two elections, their candidate would receive 52% of the money for that district.
- All challengers can qualify for an amount equal to the highest funded candidate by demonstrating public support through a petition system.
- Third party and independent candidates are funded based on demonstrated public support in the past 2 elections, using three methods and choosing the one that gives them the highest funding – but they can also gain greater parity with the highest funded candidate through the petition system.
- In the vast majority of House races the Grassroots Good Citizenship Fund shrinks the financial gap that now exists in the current system between incumbents and challengers.
- State and national parties would be able to provide assistance to candidates so long as the accumulated value of the funds, goods and services does not exceed 5% of the maximum expenditure applicable.
- All other independent expenditures are banned outright so that only the candidate is responsible for his/her message.
- The Act contains a Congressional finding that the limitations it creates are required to preserve the integrity of the electoral process, to encourage the courts to uphold the plan.
- If the courts overturn these limitations then the bill contains a requirement for expedited consideration of a constitutional amendment that would allow the implementation of these changes.